

CHAMBER of COMMERCE

OPELOUSAS ST. LANDRY

June 7, 2011

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket 11-65

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

The Opelousas-St. Landry Chamber of Commerce has recently become aware of a plan for AT&T to merge with T-Mobile, which will help deliver high-speed, wireless broadband coverage across the country. As we believe this would ultimately deliver many benefits to the citizens of the City of Opelousas and St. Landry Parish, we are writing today to offer our endorsement of the deal and ask you to back it as well.

The merger promises to enable considerable investment in wireless broadband network build out, which would help isolated populations gain access to high speed broadband for the first time, setting a new standard that will increase competition and drive further investment industry-wide. Moreover, the resources of the combined companies would help close the digital divide that has left thousands of communities behind.

That would be a game-changer. Among the many small towns and rural areas in Louisiana and across the country that need access to the mobile Internet, St. Landry Parish in particular stands to gain from expanded coverage. This is due to the parish's socioeconomic factors and its reliance on sectors like agriculture and tourism.

It is widely agreed that fourth generation platforms will support real-time, interactive applications of unprecedented usefulness in employment, job training and healthcare. But that means the disparity between rich and poor will widen if high-speed wireless Internet is not available to all citizens.

As you know, Opelousas and St. Landry Parish have a high rate of poverty. For lower income households, high-speed wireless Internet is increasingly becoming an important means for economic advancement. Furthermore, studies have shown that African Americans rely on mobile technology more than their white counterparts, which is noteworthy since Opelousas has a relatively large black population.

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The merger is also a good way to address broader economic development. Modern agriculture is actually driven by technology—management of a farm or ranch requires attention to countless variables that can be communicated instantaneously. Meanwhile, tourism benefits from an interactive experience; for example, live streaming feeds of Zydeco and Cajun concerts could create excitement for prospective visitors. The AT&T deal will bring St. Landry's farms into the 21st Century and attract much larger numbers of tourists.

The AT&T/T-Mobile merger is clearly a net positive for areas like St. Landry Parish and will change the telecommunications industry for the better.

We urge you to consider these factors carefully when reviewing the transaction.

Sincerely,

Frankie Bertrand

Frankie Bertrand, Pres/CEO